

THE SAN FRANCISCO STYLE

Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band

VOL. 3: STOMPS, ETC. & THE BLUES

GOOD TIME JAZZ.
12003



LU WATTERS' YERBA BUENA JAZZ BAND

LU WATTERS & BOB SCOBAY, *trumpets*; TURK MURPHY, *trombone*;
BOB HELM, *clarinet*; WALLY ROSE, *piano*; HARRY MORDECAI, *banjo*;
DICK LAMMI, *bass*; BILL DART, *drums*.

WHO'S WHO IN THE WATTERS BAND (1954)

WATTERS, LU *trumpet*: Born Santa Cruz, California, December 19, 1911, moved to Rio Vista, near Sacramento, shortly after. Went to St. Joseph's Military Academy, at ten became the school's most promising bugler. Played trumpet in school brass band. In 1925 moved to San Francisco, went to Polytechnic High, formed his first jazz band there in 1926, playing both cornet and trumpet. Prolonged his high school career by taking jobs as a boat musician, sailing the West Coast and through the Canal to New York. Grades in music were good enough to win him a scholarship at the University of San Francisco. At the same time, he took a good paying job in the band at the Palace Hotel, going to bed at four a.m. and to classes three hours later. The pace was too rough, so he gave up the academic world for music. Travelled the country west of the Mississippi for five years in Carol Lofner's Orchestra with few opportunities to play jazz. Always wanted to see the Orient, so took a boat job and went to China. On his return to San Francisco, formed a five-piece jazz band. Played in various small jazz groups. In 1938, organized an eleven-piece band for a job at Sweets Ballroom in Oakland. After the Sweets job ended in 1939, he tried various combinations in 1939 and 1940 until he formed group playing Monday nights at the Dawn Club. This led to the formation of the YBJB, and the phenomenally successful run there until June 1942 when he went into the Navy. Led a 20-piece Navy Band, based in Hawaii, flying throughout the Pacific area. Discharged from the Navy in September 1945, he regrouped the YBJB and opened at the Dawn Club March 1946. Closed New Year's Eve 1946, then opened Hambone Kelly's June 13, 1947 for three and a half year run closing December 31, 1950. Since then, Lu has retired from music, devoting himself to the study of geology, minerals and gem stones.

SCOBAY, BOB *trumpet*: Born Tucumcari, New Mexico, December 9, 1916. Lived in Stockton, California until he was fourteen. Learned to play cornet in grammar school, but was fascinated by chemistry and thought seriously of becoming a scientist. In 1930 the family moved to Berkeley where Scobey studied with classical instructors. On graduation from high school he chose a career in music over chemistry, and until 1938 played in ballroom orchestras, theater pit bands, radio station staff bands and various night clubs in the Bay Area. It wasn't until he met Lu Watters in 1938 that he concentrated on jazz. Joined the YBJB in 1940. Served 3½ years in Army in World War II. Played with YBJB again from 1946 to 1950 when he left to form his own group. From the start they were extremely successful. A three year stay at Victor & Roxie's in Oakland, and their popular series of GTJ records, established them among the nation's top jazz outfits. In 1952 and 1953 they were featured at the famous annual Dixieland Jubilee in Los Angeles. Scobey is married, has three small children, is an inveterate golfer and runs a successful spare-time insurance business.

MURPHY, TURK *trombone*: Born December 16, 1915, Palermo, a small town in Northern California. First instrument was an old short cornet which belonged to his father. When he was twelve his father bought him a new trombone (for \$7.50). Self-taught at first, the following year, when the family moved to Williams, Calif., Turk found a sympathetic teacher who encouraged him in his ambition to become a musician. In 1933, graduated from Williams High School and joined the Merle Howard Orchestra (where he first met Bob Helm). In 1935 and '36 he travelled the country in bands led by Val Bender, Will Osborne and Mal Hallett. Returned to Oakland and in 1937 tried to form a jazz band with Bob Helm, began collecting jazz records and studying the New Orleans style. Took lessons in harmony, counterpoint and composition. In 1938 met Paul Lingle, and played with him in a small band. Later that year first met Lu Watters. Became part of the group which played at the Big Bear sessions. In 1940 joined Watters and the YBJB. June 1942 enlisted in the Navy. In 1943, while stationed in the Bay Area, played with Bunk Johnson. As Aviation Mechanic 1st Class, stayed in Navy until 1945. Joined the YBJB when it reformed, and stayed with Watters until 1949 when he formed his own band. Played San Francisco, Los Angeles, Denver, Reno, Sacramento, and from 1952 to 1954 played at Italian Village in San Francisco. Known for his talents as a composer and vocalist as well as bandleader and trombonist.

HELM, BOB *clarinet*: Born July 18, 1914, Fairmead, California in the Central San Joaquin Valley. His father played baritone horn in concert and marching bands, and his mother played piano. First instruments were baritone horn and cornet; later switched to tenor sax and clarinet. Played first professional job (age 11) in local silent movie

These records were made by Lu Watters on six successive Mondays in May and early June 1946. To get a "dance hall sound", Watters used the Avalon Ballroom on Post Street off Van Ness in San Francisco. Two mikes were set in front of the band, which was on the stage. One mike, on a boom, was set a dozen feet in front of Watters. The other mike was set near the piano. The sound was carried via leased telephone wire to the recording studio, several blocks away, where direct disc masters were cut. In transferring the originals to tape, and then to long playing records, GTJ used latest audio techniques to reduce distortion as much as possible, improve the balance of the ensemble and the presence of the soloists. The musical and historical value of the performances, however, justify any technical flaws which remain.

theater pit band. Early influences (at the expense of his school grades) were jazz records, musicians, minstrel shows, and Louis Armstrong broadcasts from Los Angeles' Sebastian's Cotton Club. First formal training at Modesto Junior College, with Prof. Mancini, former solo clarinetist with Sousa's band. Left college in 1934 to barnstorm the West with Wolcott's Californians, and the Merle Howard Orchestra. Settled in San Francisco, became an integral part of the Big Bear sessions, played in Watters' big band at Sweets Ballroom in Oakland, then in 1940 with Watters at the Dawn Club for the formation of the YBJB. Left band 1941. In 1942, with Benny Strickler formed wartime version of the YBJB. Went into Army in 1943 (80th Division) as combat infantryman. In 1946 returned to San Francisco to join post-war YBJB and stayed with Watters through Hambone Kelly days until 1950. Since has played and recorded extensively with Turk Murphy's Jazz Band. Interests include art, literature, hunting, fishing, photography, flying, sport cars, and studying origins of jazz and folk music.

ROSE, WALLY *piano*: Born Oakland, California October 2, 1913, lived in Honolulu until he was five, then moved back to Oakland where he has lived ever since. At nine, fascinated by the family player piano, asked for lessons. Studied classical piano, but practiced jazz in secret. Throughout his career managed to keep classical and jazz interests separate and perform equally well in each style. While still in high school, to earn extra money, he worked as a boat musician, travelling on round-the-world cruises. In 1940 he met Watters at one of the Big Bear sessions, joined the YBJB, and stayed for ten years except for a three year hitch in the Navy during the War. During 1950 and '51 he played with Bob Scobey's band at Victor & Roxie's in Oakland, and from 1952 to '54 with Turk Murphy's band at The Italian Village in San Francisco. Over the years he has given several solo recitals, and found time to build an enviable reputation as a teacher in the classical field. Generally considered one of the finest living performers of authentic ragtime.

MORDECAI, HARRY *banjo*: Born San Francisco, June 30, 1918, went to Fairfax Grammar School in Marin County, later to Tamalpais High School where he met pianist Burt Bales (who was "dead aim with a sling shot"). Played harmonica duets with Bales, learned ukelele, then took banjo and guitar lessons from local teachers. Played guitar in the Tamalpais High School orchestra. Quit high school and joined the Musicians Union. In 1938 moved to San Francisco. Interest in classical jazz developed via record collecting: Armstrong's Hot Five, Jelly Roll Morton, and early blues singers. Through record collecting met Lu Watters, who had complete King Oliver, Morton & Armstrong collection. Played a few jobs with Watters in 1940. Later, during war years, played various dime grind jobs with Bill Dart, Danny Alguire (of the Firehouse Five), Bales, Dick Lammi. When the YBJB reformed in 1946, Mordecai held down the banjo chair. Left jazz in 1949, got married, and took job at the Naval Air Station in Alameda as an electrician and instrument man. In his spare time studies Spanish guitar (classical and Flamenco) and seven string lute.

LAMMI, DICK *string bass*: Born Red Lodge, Montana, January 15, 1909, moved to Astoria, Oregon at three weeks, spent his childhood there, graduated Astoria High School. First instrument (age 11) was the violin. Took up the banjo and commuted thirty miles weekly to take lessons. In high school played with a trio (The Unholy Three). In 1927 in Aberdeen, Washington, he joined The Pirates Jazz Band,

playing banjo. Moved to Portland, Oregon, took up string bass, and for next five years played it with Cole McElroy's dancehall band and the Orpheum Theater band. Also played two winter seasons in a symphonic group under the direction of the Portland Symphony's conductor, Van Hoogstratton. Moved to San Francisco in 1936 for various night club, theater and radio jobs. Took up tuba. Didn't start playing jazz again until 1941 when he met Lu Watters and joined the YBJB. He was a member of the Watters group until it disbanded. Has since played and recorded with Bob Scobey and with Turk Murphy's Jazz Band. To help his rhythm he works out regularly with weights, and is a student of metaphysics, psychology, and the occult sciences.

DART, BILL *drums*: Born San Francisco, October 2, 1915, moved to Oakland a year later. His older brother had a set of drums, and to avoid constant warfare between the brothers, Bill's mother was forced to buy him a set of his own when he was eight. Learned by playing with records. During high school picked up jobs at school dances and University of California house parties. At 17 met Bob Scobey working in a band at the Lake Merritt Hotel in Oakland. At 21 met Lu Watters playing a casual at Stanford University. In 1937-38 worked in small combinations throughout the Bay Area. During this time, he was one of the regulars at the Big Bear sessions. In 1941 joined with the YBJB at the Dawn Club and held down a day job as a welder in the shipyards. During the war years, played briefly with Bunk Johnson's seven-piece band at the C.I.O. Hall in San Francisco. In the Merchant Marine in 1945, joined the YBJB when it reformed in 1946. Played with Watters until 1950. A sports car enthusiast, is interested in dogs, and works with his wife in her pottery shop in their home, firing the kiln, mixing glazes. In 1954 played in San Francisco with Superior Stompers.

SIDE 1: STOMPS, ETC.

SOUTH by Moten & Hayes. This tune was made popular by Bennie Moten in 1928, and South has since remained a great favorite.

1919 RAG is a traditional New Orleans street march which Turk Murphy learned from Bunk Johnson during Bunk's San Francisco stay in 1944, GTJ has issued recordings of it by Murphy (GTJ 12026), and Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Band (GTJ 12022).

CHATTANOOGA STOMP by King Oliver was recorded in 1925 by Oliver's band, and is ideally suited for two trumpets.

SUNSET CAFE STOMP by Percy Venable. The Sunset Cafe was well known in Chicago jazz life during the '20s. The tune was originally recorded in 1927 by Louis Armstrong's Hot Five.

COPENHAGEN by Charlie Davie & Walter Melrose is one of the more popular jazz tunes, and the band played it in response to numerous requests.

PANAMA by Will H. Tyers is a traditional favorite of jazz bands.

SIDE 2: THE BLUES

WORKING MAN BLUES by King Oliver was recorded in 1924.

RICHARD M. JONES BLUES by Richard M. Jones, was originally called All Night Blues. Watters changed the title as a tribute to Jones when he died. Jones was a pianist and blues composer who worked for the old Okeh company in the '20s, and was partly responsible for the quality of their jazz records, including the Armstrong Hot Fives.

TRIANGLE JAZZ BLUES by Irwin P. Leclere is a rarely heard tune published in 1911 and rediscovered by the YBJB.

STORYVILLE BLUES. This Bunk Johnson composition, also titled Bienville Blues, has been recorded by Bunk (GTJ 12048), Turk Murphy (GTJ 12027), and the Firehouse Five Plus Two (GTJ S10040).

WEARY BLUES by Artie Matthews is a jazz standard. Matthews, who also composed the Pastime Rags, teaches at the Cosmopolitan Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati.

FRIENDLESS BLUES by W. C. Handy. Watters liked the mournful sound of the first strain, and used it as the band's closing theme. It is a tune which holds powerful associations for the ex-members of the band. Turk confesses to having tears in his eyes when he played it for the last time with the YBJB. Both he and Scobey still play it with their own groups.

By LESTER KOENIG (1954)

Cover photo by Fred Lyon. Design by George Kershaw. Album copy-right 1954 by Good Time Jazz Record Co., Inc. Printed in U.S.A.

GOOD TIME JAZZ
Trade Mark Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

SOUTH

By Moran & Hayes

1919

Traditional

**CHATTANOOGA
STOMP**

By King Oliver & Alphonse Picou

SUNSET CAFE STOMP

By Percy Venetian

COPENHAGEN

By Charlie Davis & Walter Melrose

PANAMA

By Nino R. Tigrè

SET A
L-12003
(LKL 12-05)

Side 1
STOMPS, ETC.

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YERBA BUENA JAZZ BAND**

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LONG PLAYING MICROGROOVE
GOOD TIME JAZZ RECORD CO., INC., LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

GOOD TIME JAZZ
Trade Mark Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

WORKING MAN
BLUES
By King Oliver
RICHARD M. JONES BLUES
By Richard M. Jones
TRIANGLE JAZZ BLUES
By Irvin Lickens
BIENVILLE BLUES
Traditional
WEARY BLUES
By Artie Matthews
FRIENDLESS BLUES
By W. C. Handy

SET A
L-12003
(LKL 12 06)

Side B
THE BLUES

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LKL 12 06 05